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Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Charleston, IL 61920

DAVID KIDWELL, *Sports Information Director*

OFFICE: (217) 581-2920

HOME: (217) 345-4166

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's softball team is heading south.

The Lady Panthers will travel to Oklahoma Wednesday (Mar. 21) to begin a 10-day trip that will conclude with an appearance at the Southern Illinois-Edwardsville Tournament Mar. 30-31.

Eastern will open the southern swing with another tournament, the prestigious American Legion National Collegiate Tournament Mar. 22-24 in Bartlesville, OK.

"We're going to go for broke in the Bartlesville tournament to prove that we can play with that caliber of competition," EIU head coach Deanna D'Abbraccio said. "I would assume that most of the other teams will have already played in several games, so we'll be at a definite disadvantage. But we're really eager to get out and play."

The Lady Panthers were scheduled to open their season Mar. 17 against the College of St. Francis, but cold, wet weather forced the cancellation of that doubleheader. Instead, Eastern will open its 1984 campaign Thursday (Mar. 22) against Iowa State, a member of Eastern's pool in the American Legion 16-team tournament.

Friday contests with Oklahoma State and Colorado State will conclude pool play for the Lady Panthers. Pool-play standings will then place all 16 teams into single-elimination brackets for championship and consolation playoffs.

D'Abbraccio described the field at Bartlesville as "quality Division I programs from many different regions," adding that she will use her top two pitchers-- Donna Ridgway (Annapolis-Hutsonville) and Shelly Eddington (Brighton-Southwestern/Lewis & Clark) --exclusively in the tourney.

"Once we get to Oklahoma City, we'll go to a four-pitcher rotation," D'Abbraccio said. "I'd like to see our pitchers throw well because I think they'll be our bread and butter down the line."

Oklahoma City will be the next stop for Eastern following the American Legion tournament, with games at the University of Oklahoma and Central State also planned before the competition at Edwardsville.